

Court ruling could overturn dozens of convictions

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Dozens of Spokane area killers and rapists could be getting new trials thanks to a Washington state Supreme Court ruling about the way their juries were selected.

The most notorious killer to have his conviction overturned is Brian Frawley, who was convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing Spokane mother Margaret Cordova in 2004.

In Frawley's case prosecutors are now faced with trying to round up witnesses who took the stand 10 years ago and "hopefully find evidence that's been locked away for more than a decade."

At the time of his trial, in order to select a fair and impartial jury the court needed to ask prospective jurors some pretty personal questions, specifically if they had been raped. As part of a long standing practice the court asked the rape question in the judge's chambers out of respect for the jurors' privacy.

"Because we want to find out if jurors have these kinds of experiences and because of their privacy concerns judges have typically done this in chambers," Former Deputy Prosecutor Kevin Korsmo said.

During his trial Frawley agreed quizzing jurors in private would benefit his defense and so Frawley waived his right to have that part of jury selection done in public. However, in 2007, the State Court of Appeals ruled Frawley wasn't properly advised of all of his legal options and overturned his conviction.

Cordova's mother – Vicki Lamere – and her boyfriend Avery Doutré hoped the state supreme court would see things differently but, in late September, justices upheld the lower court's decision and ordered Frawley get a new trial.

Frawley's already been transferred from prison to the Spokane County Jail to aid in his defense and while he prepares for his new trial another killer is getting a new shot at freedom thanks to this ruling.

Clifford Meyers was convicted of the execution style murder of a man sitting in his truck at the Shadle Center WalMart in 2005. Investigators think the gunman and victim were fighting over stolen property.

Meyers was sentenced to 50 years in prison, but because not all of his prospective jurors were questioned in open court, Meyers will also receive a new trial.